Catholic, Jesuit and Intercultural:
The Vocation of a Jesuit University Today

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Let me begin on a personal note. I spent two months, part of a sabbatical from a university in Africa, here at Loyola Marymount University thirty years ago this past January and February. This is the first time I have been back, and I am astounded to see how the campus has grown over those three decades. I have grown too, but I hope LMU’s growth over those thirty years hasn’t mimicked my descent over the same period from a leaner 41 to a more flaccid 71.

The institution that has become Loyola Marymount University commenced its history a hundred years ago this year, a college in the older European and Jesuit sense, running from secondary through undergraduate years. Loyola College of Los Angeles eventually migrated here to Westchester. As a New Yorker, with our own Westchester planted north of the city, I must say that your Westchester has the advantage of being in the West, more generally, and in the western end of Los Angeles as well. It is not far from one side of the Pacific rim, that is, the beach, a fact I noted in the dress-code of your students when I guest-lectured here in a course on African history taught by Sister Margaret-Ann Renehan, R.S.H.M., thirty years ago.

I. CATHOLICITY IN A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

The 1973 merger of Loyola University (as it had become in 1930) with Marymount College (which had already combined with the College of St. Joseph in
Orange a few years earlier), made Loyola Marymount a truly Catholic university. For those of you who are not Catholic, that may sound like a dubious trumpet blast. Bear with me as I explain what I mean.

I am referring, in the first instance, to small-c catholicity, but even big-C Catholicity is best understood as organically related to small-c catholicity. When we say of someone that her or his interests are catholic, we mean that such a person is open to all sorts of realities. The combination of Loyola University with Marymount College in 1973 assured forever that the catholicity of this institution would be open to the reality of slightly more than half of the human race, women. But small-c catholicity in education means even more than gender diversity, although that was a major accomplishment nearly four decades ago that we sometimes forget to recognize.

Small-c catholicity in terms of education denotes an intellectual adventure that embraces the whole of reality, at least potentially, a formation of the mind and heart that eschews the merely local in its focus or the purely vocational in its scope. There are elements of the local and the vocational in every education, but they do not—or should not—exhaust it. LMU is not a for-profit college that advertises itself as preparing students for jobs as lab technicians or as computer programmers, even if some of your graduates may eventually work in laboratories and many more will work with computers. Nor is LMU some sort of educational hothouse where students are not prepared at the conclusion of their degrees to do anything useful, anything that might actually make them employable. A person with a small-c catholic education is employable but she or he is also able to think outside the box when economic realities change and the time comes to
consider new forms of employment. Precisely because he or she has been educated liberally, the graduate of LMU should be able to reinvent himself or herself as necessary.

Furthermore, and I think of this more now that I am no longer 41, a liberal education can prepare you for the life of leisure that is supposed to come with retirement. (Let me note in passing that I am far from retirement, and my superiors don’t want me to retire as long as I am able to help put meat and potatoes on the table!) A liberal education prepares you for what the German philosopher Josef Pieper once called, enticingly, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, an ideal for the whole of life but especially for a final phase of life not lived in regret for the loss of past ‘usefulness.’ Human life is really not about being useful: the human person does not, finally, function as a cog in a wheel. Our ultimate goal is the life of contemplation and love of what is contemplated. It isn’t all golf, bridge and cocktails after retirement, although they surely have their place.

Thomas Merton ended the 1948 autobiography of his youth, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, with a Latin proverb that says something significant that can be applied analogously to small-c catholicity and a liberal education: *Sit finis libri sed non finis quaerendi*, quite literally, “Let this be the end of the book but not the end of searching.” A truly liberal education never ends, the searching never stops, and if it does stop, the academic program that started that education failed to achieve its end. The words, ‘Is that going to be on the exam?’, are surely the most disheartening a teacher can hear from a student, and possibly an early warning sign that the student in question has already reached his or her *finis quarendi*.

I have said something about small-c catholicity as the point of a liberal education. Such an education opens students up to considering reality in the manner the Greeks
called *kath’ olou*, as a whole. A trade school prepares students to repair cars, build houses, design clothing: all noble and useful pursuits, but not a liberal education. A university opens the mind up onto a larger perspective: the *universum*, the full enchilada of reality. A small-c catholic education—an education *kath’ olou*—teaches students how to begin the life-long adventure of critical thinking, a journey of imaginative assessment, construction and even reconstruction of the world in which they live.

What do I mean about the earlier-mentioned relationship between small-c catholicity and big-C Catholicity? Many American Catholics have fallen into the seventeenth-century Anglican tendency to define themselves as Roman Catholics. That is not, as some conservative Catholic thinkers seem to imagine today, a more orthodox definition of what it means to be a Catholic. It is, instead, a manifestation of the branch-theory of the Catholic Church: the idea that there is an Anglican branch, a Roman branch, a Greek branch of the Catholic Church. ‘*Roman Catholic*’ as a term is the friendlier version of what used to be called, in an earlier and less ecumenical era, ‘Romish.’

To be Catholic in Church terms, with a big C, means to be concerned with the whole world. A Church is big-C Catholic if it reaches out beyond its place of origin to share the riches of its faith tradition with other people. True Catholicism manifests itself in the ability of the Church to adapt itself to new cultures and circumstances. Admittedly, not every form of adaptation makes it possible for a Church to be not only Catholic but also One, Holy and Apostolic—the other three distinguishing marks of the Church besides its Catholicity. But Catholicity is a distinctive mark of the Church considered as a whole.
The Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s major epistles chart the path towards the Catholicizing of the Way of Jesus. Even the most Jewish of the Gospels, Matthew, ends with the command of Jesus to his disciples “to make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). That command wasn’t easy for Matthew’s Jewish Christian congregation to take. Matthew’s story of the Magi who sought out the newborn King of the Jews is a literary elaboration on motifs from the Hebrew Bible. This elaboration or *midrash* was probably aimed at helping to reconcile the Jewish Christians in Matthew’s community to having Gentile Christians in their company, sharing their Eucharistic table with them. Those Gentile Christians were symbolized in Matthew’s Gospel by the southwest Asian astrologers called Magi. The Catholicity of the Church is its overflowing ability to reinvent itself in many historical periods and in various cultural settings, its ability to remain basically the same in essentials and yet almost infinitely variable in everything else.

The big-C Catholicity of the Church as a term, as my predecessor in the McGinley Chair at Fordham, Avery Cardinal Dulles, once succinctly described it, “designated the whole church as opposed to particular churches composing it.” Dulles pointed out in the same context that the Catholic critics of the schismatic Donatist Church in late fourth- and early fifth-century North Africa, most notably St. Augustine, “made much of the fact that the Catholic Church—the *catholica*—was a world-wide communion, as the merely local church of the Donatists was not.” Some of you may belong to churches or other religious communities that define themselves more locally; we have a very beautiful Episcopal church in New York City that calls itself “the Little
Church Around the Corner,” but it is much more universal in its outreach than that somewhat twee name might suggest.

Some of you may not belong to any church or religious community at all. Whatever may be your religious belonging or non-belonging, I would like to sketch for you the vision of a big-C Catholicity in religious terms that challenges us to imitate that catholicity at least in small-c terms at LMU. A large-C Catholic university should keep its eyes on the horizon—what lies beyond the beach that constitutes the nearest concretization of the Pacific rim. No education is catholic in small-c terms or Catholic in big-C terms unless it directs those being educated to the really big picture: the other side of the Pacific, the other side of Tijuana, both sides of the equator.

Even if a theology department in a big-C Catholic university has a special responsibility to present its students with a broad vision of what the big-C Catholic Christian tradition has meant historically and what it means today, the small-c catholicity of a big-C Catholic university means that it has a special responsibility to open up its students to the rest of the world across the borders I have just mentioned, including the religious diversity of that world beyond the horizon. I note with interest that here at LMU you have the Huffington Ecumenical Institute precisely aimed at bridging the divide that has separated Byzantine Orthodox Churches and Churches in union with Rome for nearly a millennium. True Catholicity strives to bridge every form of Church division.

Here, in what once was New Spain, LMU has a particular vocation to examine the relationships that exist in this Spanish-speaking and English-speaking metropolis between all its citizens and all its non-citizens as well. Both the recently retired Cardinal Archbishop of Los Angeles and his successor as Archbishop have taken prominent roles
in the Church and in the nation in speaking up for immigrants, documented and undocumented. LMU as a university must keep the eyes of its students and staff, the eyes of its graduates and friends, on the really big picture: Asia and the Pacific Islands on the other rim of the Pacific, Latin America just beyond San Diego, the whole Global South above and below the equator. The presence right here in Los Angeles of people from all those places—Asians and Pacific Islanders, Latin Americans of every national origin, Africans from every part of the Bright Continent—may help to keep LMU people’s eyes focused on realities that are both big-C Catholic and small-c catholic alike.

II. JESUITRY IN A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

When Ignatius Loyola and his first companions, students of the University of Paris, formally declared themselves to be the Company or Companions of Jesus—the *Compañía de Jesús*, or in more Latinate terms, the Society of Jesus—they dedicated themselves to a world-wide vision rather than a local one. They eventually wanted to travel from Venice to the Holy Land to live among the people they referred to as “the Turks,” but war on the high seas between the Most Serene Republic and the Ottoman Sultanate prevented them from undertaking that voyage. In 1537 they moved instead towards Rome and set up residence as closely as they could to the papal residence at the time, better known today as the Palazzo Venezia.

What did this location near the papal palace signify for Ignatius and his companions? It meant that their vow to go to Jerusalem was now being replaced by what is the characteristic fourth vow of the solemnly professed in the Society of Jesus, after the normal three vows of apostolic poverty, celibate chastity and obedience to duly-appointed superiors: “I further promise a special obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff in regard to the
missions, according to the same Apostolic Letters and the Constitutions.” Proximity to the papal palace distanced the first Jesuits from the jurisdiction of local bishops and the local concerns such bishops were likely to promote. Ignatius and his first companions also decided that Jesuits should not become local bishops unless commanded to do so by “him who has the power to command,” i.e., the Pope, and you have here at LMU a perfect example of someone so commanded.

The first Jesuits were meant to serve the Universal or Catholic Church first and foremost, even if they de facto served local churches as well in Europe and elsewhere. Francis Xavier, one of the first ten Jesuits and a younger college classmate of Ignatius in Paris, took seriously that commitment “in regard to the missions” and spent the last ten years of his life, from the age of 36 to 46, travelling further and further east of Europe into south and east Asia—through modern-day India, and then Indonesia, and finally Japan, where he was the first Christian missionary. When the Japanese asked him if the Middle Kingdom, China, had accepted the Christian message, he decided to attempt that journey as well, but died off the coast of China while trying to arrange to have himself smuggled into that vast empire. Despite what the enemies of the Jesuits have said for centuries—and, as Henry Kissinger put it, “even a paranoiac has some real enemies”—the Society of Jesus is both big-C Catholic and small-c catholic.

What has small-c catholicity meant in the Jesuit tradition of education? Jesuit schools in the second half of the sixteenth century, at least on the college level, were very different from the cathedral schools of the Middle Ages. They were not primarily aimed at training in theology or even in philosophy, but rather in what were called studia humanitatis, the formation of their students for lives of eloquentia perfecta in the public
The Jesuits were not begun as a reaction against the Protestant Reformation but rather as a reaction against ignorance in Catholic settings, and even outside Catholic circles. The Jesuits did indeed become polemicists in the Reformation era, but that was not their original purpose or the purpose of their schools.

Jesuit schools, from the first one founded at Messina in Sicily in 1548, placed their highest priority on the study of secular subjects like the Greek and Latin classics and, even when they did philosophy, they studied astronomy as part of the curriculum. Jesuit astronomers at the Roman College did the homework required to straighten out the seasons at the time of the changeover Pope Gregory XIII effected from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. The Protestant and Orthodox churches for centuries resisted this “Romish” knavery, but they have for the most part come around by now, with the odd result that the famous October Revolution of 1917 is now commemorated in November, if there is anyone left in the Russian Federation who still wants to celebrate the event.

When the Jesuits arrived in China in the late sixteenth century they discovered the incredible cultural richness of the intellectual tradition stemming from the ancient Chinese sage, K’ung-fu-tzu. The fact that we know that sage by the Latin translation of his name, Confucius, can be attributed to Matteo Ricci, the Italian Jesuit who introduced the Master K’ung’s thought to the West. He also introduced to China modern cartography, modern astronomy and Renaissance mnemonic techniques that helped Chinese civil servants to prepare for their rigorous exams. All this he did while sharing the Gospel with at least some of the intellectuals of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-
century China, never forcing his way but always offering them the possibility of a truly Catholic (big-C and small-c) Christianity that could make sense in a Chinese setting.

Nestorian Christians had first introduced Christianity into China in the seventh century, but Nestorian Christianity had died out completely by the fourteenth century. Ricci and the Jesuits who followed him into China introduced a Catholic Christianity that has survived, despite much opposition, for the last four hundred years. All of this happened despite the fact that the Jesuits were once condemned in Rome for their tolerance and indeed promotion of Chinese Christians’ continued participation in the ritual veneration of their ancestors. Many martyrs of the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China are revered in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church, as well as some martyrs in earlier and later periods, but too little attention has been paid by the Church to the witness borne by people like Ricci whose approach to Chinese culture did not lead to his martyrdom but to the imperial edict that he be honorably buried in Beijing, not in the European enclave of Macau. I would like to suggest that the positive attitude Ricci and his successors took towards Chinese culture derived, in some sense, from the positive attitude the first Jesuits in Europe took to the Greek and Roman classics.

Note, moreover, that the Christian Humanism of the early Jesuits was intimately connected with Ignatian Spirituality. What does that mean? Perhaps the summit of Ignatian spirituality is found in the concluding meditation of the Spiritual Exercises, the “Contemplation for Attaining Love.” As an introduction to the rest of one’s life after the Spiritual Exercises, this Contemplation suggests that we meditate on how God expresses his love for us and how we in turn should respond to that love. The four points of the meditation then specify the signals of God’s love for us in the gifts he gives us, natural
and supernatural, his presence in those gifts, his working in those gifts, those gifts as reflections of the divine beauty and goodness. This Contemplation lies at the foundation of Ignatian spirituality and its Renaissance optimism about the natural world, its desire to find God in all things, including the Greek and Roman classics, astronomy, art, music.

The Jesuits in Europe were patrons of Palestrina, Bernini and Rubens. The Baroque and the cultural mix of the Reductions of Paraguay took off from this sort of joyful celebration of the beauty of the world. In seventeenth-century France the Jesuit schools were noted for their interest in dance. Not only Catholics can benefit from some exposure to this intellectual and spiritual tradition. The Jesuits were still willing to live among such people “to help souls,” to use a favorite phrase of Ignatius, no matter whether they accepted the Gospel or not. Jesuit education in countries like India and Japan to the present day, where the vast majority of the students in Jesuit schools are not Catholics or Christians, is not aimed at evangelization. Its first aim is to educate, to develop in such students of whatever religious belonging or no religious belonging the perfecting of their humanity.

The “greater glory of God,” another favorite phrase of Ignatius, was not a vain attempt to make God more glorious but the all-out effort to burnish God’s image and likeness in fully alive, deeply intelligent men and women. In the words of the early Christian writer Irenaeus, Gloria Dei est vivens homo: “the glory of God is the living human being.” Educating a student makes that student more perfectly reflect God’s glory. Note the phrase “more perfectly.” The process of increasing God’s glory through education never ends. Finally, our students have to take up that task of perfecting
themselves when they commence the rest of their lives, when they carry on their pursuit of wisdom and knowledge after school ends.

Burnishing the image of God in the human beings who are our students commits us who are teachers and administrators to reach out, along with our students, to human beings beyond our university walls, beyond our manicured lawns. The two Jesuit theologians whom Ignatius sent to the Council of Trent at the behest of Pope Paul III, Diego Laynez and Alfonso Salmeron, were instructed by Ignatius to live in a hospital while at the Council. A hospital at that time was really a hospice for the poor who were ill and dying. There Laynez and Salmeron were to serve the down-and-outs of sixteenth-century Trent in whatever time they had left over from preparing those three- and four-hour lectures to the not very theologically astute Council Fathers during the daytime sessions. Yes, as you might have guessed, both Laynez and Salmeron fell sick at one time or another during the Council, but then again, the cardinals and bishops who were the Council Fathers probably fell sick as well, but not from exhaustion.

We Jesuits have been urged by our last four General Congregations to dedicate ourselves to the service of the faith and the promotion of justice in tandem with each other. When I think of those twinned phrases, I think of Laynez and Salmeron at Trent. I would like to suggest that institutions that bear the hallmark of Jesuit should also commit themselves to the service of faith and the promotion of justice. Does that mean you have to work in a hospice at night after a long day of teaching and writing and correcting exams? Not necessarily, but it might be a good idea for all of us to venture out of our comfort zones from time to time into the areas of impacted poverty in Los Angeles, the areas of impacted poverty in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The late Archbishop of
Recife in Brazil, Dom Helder Camara, famously said that “When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why are they poor, they call me a Communist.” We all need to ask important questions about the two billion or more people in the world who go to sleep hungry every night. Our Jesuit education is not complete until we have come to terms with that reality.

III. INTERCULTURALISM IN A JESUIT UNIVERSITY

Whatever may have been the vocation of a Catholic and Jesuit university in times past and places far away, today a Catholic and Jesuit university situated in a cosmopolitan city like Los Angeles cannot but be intercultural as well as Catholic and Jesuit. There are some who would see a contradiction in such a threefold description; I do not. I have already noted the basically non-Christian student bodies in so many Indian and Japanese Jesuit schools, and yet they are Jesuit and Catholic schools. But I am sure that the student body and the faculty and administrative staff of nearly every Jesuit college and university in the United States is now replete with Christians of other traditions, as well as with every variety of Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists as well as people of other or no religious adherence. We are de facto intercultural.

Let me give a concrete symbol of our situation today. It is becoming increasingly obvious to all of us, I am sure, that throughout the world, but also here in the United States, our students and our neighbors come from very varied cultural backgrounds. Last year I saw a film that illustrates this quite deftly. I must explain that I rarely see films, but the director of my annual retreat last year had me see several films in video form at night. The excellent 2008 film I saw on retreat was *Gran Torino*, starring Clint Eastwood, who was also its director; Eastwood said at the time it came out that it would also be his last
film. *Gran Torino* provides a wonderful metaphor for what happens in this country when very different cultures meet. I suppose everyone in Los Angeles has seen every movie, but I will summarize it for those who haven’t, or those of you Angelenos who have seen so many movies that you easily mix them all up and cannot distinguish *Gran Torino* from *Toy Story 4*.

The film tells the story of a curmudgeonly, not particularly practicing white Catholic man in post-industrial Michigan, Walt Kowalski, a Korean War veteran, played by Clint Eastwood. He is an angry and aging widower, terminally ill, who has horrible grandchildren who play video games at his wife’s funeral. The chief protagonist’s once middle-class neighborhood has run down and is increasingly populated by Hmong refugees, immigrants from Southeast Asia. The next-door Hmong people turn out to be wonderful human beings, as Kowalski gradually learns, but some Hmong adolescent males have formed gangs that attempt to initiate a next-door Hmong teenage boy into their miscreancy. As the film progresses, Eastwood learns more and more about the Hmong, and the family next door learn more and more about him. Finally, as the film reaches its astonishing denouement, the hero is reconciled with the Church, takes on the Hmong gang members who have raped the daughter in his neighbors’ home, prevents a revenge killing by her brother and dies a non-violent death himself, his arms stretched out in the form of a cross.

Not every cultural clash in the United States works out so heroically, as I am sure you know. Nor does every cultural clash in the world more generally work out so well. But the film *Gran Torino* may serve us today as a morality tale for our country and our world. For better or for worse, our local neighborhood and our world neighborhood are
even more culturally diverse than Walt Kowalski’s neighborhood in the rust belt of Michigan. At the risk of saying too little about too much, let me sketch a world of cross-cultural neighborhoods. I do not subscribe to Samuel Huntington’s pessimism about the clash of civilizations, nor to his WASP superiority complex, a malady I encountered several times when I was a graduate student at Harvard in the years before the Flood. I will suggest that there are seven tense neighborhoods that we Americans need to understand if we are going to live in the modern world.

The first such neighborhood, usually called the Middle East, I prefer to think of as the vast semi-arid zone between the Nile on the west and the Amu Darya (or Oxus) on the east, although it includes more territory to the west and more territory to the east as well. The turmoil in the Arab world since January has upended much that we Americans have taken for granted for several decades about the Nile-to-Amu Darya lands. What lies in the future for Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Tunisia? What will become of the decaying clerical rule of Iran, the ethnic and religious chaos in Afghanistan, the combustible country called Pakistan? Have we paid enough attention to the relative social and economic success of Muslim countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and Bangladesh? Are we paying sufficient attention to the innovative Muslim intellectuals within and outside the Middle East today? I am tired of reading the same dreary denunciations of radical Islamists by hate merchant bloggers in this country. Why do the media in the United States not do more homework on the Egyptian, Libyan, Tunisian, Syrian and Iranian intellectuals whose thought grew legs and took to the streets in Cairo, Benghazi, Tunis, Damascus and Tehran in recent months? It is high time that we Americans start studying this area of
the world from the viewpoint of all the actors in that region. How many of our students are studying Arabic, Modern Hebrew, Turkish, Farsi, Pashto, Urdu, Bengali? How many of our American diplomats serving in that area are really fluent in those languages? How are we as the leaders of Catholic and Jesuit Universities preparing ourselves and our students to understand this part of the world?

The second such neighborhood is Africa, especially (but not exclusively) Africa south of the Sahara. That vast region of dry steppe—the root mean of the Arabic word sahrāʾ—has often proven itself a sea across which people and ideas crossed from one shore (sāhil) to the other, most notably the people who brought the ideas of Islam. Several African countries have unraveled in the past few years: Somalia, most disastrously, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast and Zimbabwe as well. A few others that unraveled a decade or more ago have recovered, at least partially: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique. Some stand on the edge of a precipice—I am thinking particularly of Nigeria and Sudan. Others have made tremendous strides in the last decade or two: South Africa in its transition to majority rule, Ghana in its return to genuine democracy. What do our students, what do we, their teachers and administrators, know about contemporary Africa? Do we take Africa seriously in academic terms? Do we recognize the growing presence of people from Africa in our major cities? I don’t take taxis often in New York City, but when I do I can usually exchange greetings with the drivers in either Yoruba or Twi. Is this also true in LA? If you haven’t asked before where the driver comes from, do so from now on.

The third such neighborhood is South Asia, Southeast Asia and Island Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia,
Papua-New Guinea and the Philippines. There is much we could learn about economic and social development in some of these countries; there is much that we need to understand about oppression, ethnic conflict, majority-minority relations and religious freedom in the same countries. Are we teaching Hindi, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Tagalog? Do our art courses take seriously the painterly and sculptural and architectural traditions of these countries? What do our students, what do we, their teachers and administrators, know about this part of the world? Do we recognize the growing presence of people from South Asia, Southeast Asia and Island Asia in our midst? Who is staffing our hospitals, nursing homes, newspaper stands?

The fourth such neighborhood is, of course, East Asia, and I know that LMU is doing a great deal to encourage students to study in China, Japan and Korea. I am particularly happy to see you have linkages with Sogang, the Jesuit University of Korea, and Sophia (or Jochi, in Japanese), the Jesuit University of Japan and the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines. Your program in Asian and Pacific Studies and the center you have in Playa Vista to host Chinese scholars are models every American Jesuit university should emulate. The cooperation of the American Jesuit universities, including LMU, in the Beijing Center for more than a decade foreshadows an age when we shall realize the unity of the intellect across every frontier. Perhaps some day LMU and other Jesuit universities in this country will help to re-establish a Jesuit and Catholic University presence in China. From what I have heard, the beginning of such an enterprise is being discussed, at least, in Hong Kong. I wish I were forty years younger. For those of you, Jesuits and non-Jesuits, who are younger, look into it. Horace Greeley once told people from the Atlantic coast of the United States to “Look west, young man.” More inclusively
I would urge young women and young men to look even further west: to what Eurocentric language calls the Far East.

The fifth such neighborhood begins right here in this corner of New Spain. Your brothers and sisters to the south of San Diego no doubt occupy much of your intellectual and spiritual energy, and I am happy to see that LMU has a connection with the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico. Frankly I think your students will spend less times as tourists in Mexico City than they will in Madrid and San Sebastian, and a non-tourist insertion into a Latin American setting will do more for them educationally in the long run.

The sixth such neighborhood for opening staff and students up to a larger world may be described rather depressingly as the ruins of the former Russian and subsequently Soviet Empires. The Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus have more than enough internal problems to occupy a few generations of historians and social scientists, to say nothing of other political entities that were once subject to the czars and later the commissars. This vast territory stretches from the borders of Eastern Europe to the Pacific shores of northern Asia. So much of American expertise on this area of the world was framed in the outdated parameters of the Cold War that we need to start again, if we have the language capacities to do so, to study the vast territory west and east of the Urals and as far south as the Black Sea and the various populations that have lived in those areas for many centuries.

The seventh such neighborhood that we need to recognize, despite its relative hiddenness from our view, is all around us here within the United States: the worlds of Native Americans and American people of color. The correspondent A.J. Langguth
published a book last year arguing that the two original sins of America—the dispossession of Native Americans from their indigenous territories by Andrew Jackson on the plea of States’ Rights and the desire to perpetuate African slavery in the South on the same basis—are intimately linked. All of our Jesuit Universities in the United States need to come to terms with the reality most clearly perceived by the Jesuits of the Wisconsin, Missouri and Oregon provinces in this country: the presence of Native Americans in our midst as an underclass. What have we, or our ancestors, done to them? What, for that matter, did our ancestors do to the slaves brought to the new world from Africa from the late fifteenth until the early nineteenth century? What should we do for both of these populations? Should we not, at a very minimum, take seriously their cultures? The Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, once a slave-owning body until the 1840s, came to terms with that reality in an act of repentance about a decade ago. That province has also used some of its treasure gained from the sale of its former tobacco plantations to underwrite minority education in the high schools of that province. How seriously have we in Catholic and Jesuit universities taken the study of Native American and African American history and culture?

You may have noticed by now that I have neglected an eighth neighborhood: Western Europe and its branch office to the north of us, Canada, and its other branch offices much to our south, Australia and New Zealand. I have no doubt that all of us would enjoy times spent in any of those places, but I want to propose for all of us more challenging neighborhoods where we can learn something we don’t know already. It is easy for us to go to Toronto, Dublin, Oxford, Sydney, Christchurch. They speak a language somewhat like our own. And their culture is somewhat like our own: we know
how to live in the more or less Christian or even post-Christian ‘West,’ wherever that ‘West’ is geographically located. But if we go to study or send students to study in that eighth neighborhood, I would suggest concentrating on places where English is not the first language, so that we and our students will expand our linguistic horizons.

For the sake of our education as faculty, staff and students, I suggest that we have a lot to learn in intercultural terms by engaging intellectually with all of the first seven neighborhoods. One great help we might have in engaging with those neighborhood would be to seek out academic relationships with Catholic and especially Jesuit institutions or centers of learning and dialogue in all of these areas. That includes not only universities but also seminaries and various study centers—academic, pastoral and social; the intellectual dialogue of Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Latin American Jesuits with their socio-cultural environments is often taking places in such locales. Jesuit universities in the United States will not have the resources major private and public secular universities might have to offer the supporting language studies that would be needed to study in depth the vast cultural complexes of these varied neighborhoods. Indeed, no single secular university in this country or elsewhere can do all that. But in cooperation with the Jesuit institutions in those first seven neighborhoods something new and valuable might be created that would be of great benefit for all parties involved.

None of these seven neighborhoods is in for an easy future as things now stand. Each of those neighborhoods has its own Gran Torino plot to work out. Where are the Clint Eastwoods to help to address this task? You may be able to meet them in the first seven neighborhoods. Who knows, you may even be able to work together with them in the struggle.